

## Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 IO-10 DODE-00

CIAE-00 NSAE-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 /070 W

----- 077650

R 101705Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3838

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4669

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINR XF

SUBJECT: INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY ESTIMATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST

REF: STATE 71859 AND SUBSEQUENT

1. WE APPRECIATE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON SNIE 30-1-75, "NEXT  
STEPS IN THE MIDDLE EAST." WE FOREBORE IMMEDIATE COMMENT  
ON POSSIBILITY THAT INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY AND KEY AREA POSTS

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MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN POSSESSION OF DATA TO WHICH WE NOT RPT

NOT PRIVY. IN VIEW OF TRAFFIC GENERATED BY REFTTEL, HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN THE CASE.

2. IN GENERAL, WE CONSIDER CONCLUSIONS MORE GLOOMY THAN OUR READING OF SITUATION WARRANTS FROM THIS ADMITTEDLY SOMEWHAT LIMITED VANTAGE POINT. WE DO BELIEVE THERE ARE TWO SIGNIFICANT OMISSIONS IN THE ASSESSMENT: A) ROLE OF PALESTINIANS AS ACTORS RATHER THAN MERE PAWNS IN ME DEVELOPMENTS; AND B) UNSTABLE LEBANESE/PALESTINIAN/ISRAELI INTER-RELATIONSHIP AND ITS POTENTIAL AS FUSE FOR GENERAL ARAB-ISRAELI HOSTILITIES.

3. PALESTINIAN ELEMENT: WE WERE STRUCK BY TENDENCY OF SNIE JUDGMENTS TO DEAL WITH PALESTINIANS (I.E., PLO) IN PASSIVE SENSE ONLY. WHILE IT MAY BE TRUE THAT ONLY STATES CAN WAGE WAR, THEY DO NOT POSSESS MONOPOLY ON PROVOKING CONFLICTS UNLESS SOME PRIOR UNDERSTANDING EXISTS AMONG POTENTIAL COMBATTANTS. PALESTINIANS, PARTICULARLY PLO, HAVE ACQUIRED POSITION IN ARAB WORLD WHICH PROVIDES THEM WITH CAPACITY FOR RELATIVELY INDEPENDENT ACTION, EVEN IF PRIMARILY OF A NEGATIVE, SPOILING VARIETY, IN ME DEVELOPMENTS. WHILE PALESTINIANS ARE DEPENDENT ON SUPPORT OF ARAB GOVTS FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THEIR POSITIVE GOALS, HOWEVER THESE MAY BE DEFINED, IT IS PROBABLE THAT PLO WILL CONTINUE TO AVOID, INSOFAR AS POSSIBLE, BECOMING IDENTIFIED AS ADJUNCT OF ANY SINGLE ARAB STATE AND TO MANEUVER AMONG THOSE, OFTEN COMPETING, STATES TO MAINTAIN AN INDEPENDENT PRESENCE AND VOICE.

4. OTHER AREA POSTS CAN JUDGE BETTER THAN WE THE EXTENT OF COMMITMENT OF ARAB STATES TO PLO AND ITS OBJECTIVES. NONETHELESS, WE DO BELIEVE, THAT ALTHOUGH REFERENCES TO "PALESTINIAN RIGHTS" HAVE BECOME STANDARD RHETORIC OF ARAB GOVTS, THIS RHETORIC, WHILE FREQUENTLY SELF-SERVING, IS NOT ENTIRELY EMPTY. IN SHORT, WE BELIEVE PALESTINIANS POSSESS CAPACITY(A) AT LEAST TO IMPEDE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WHICH DOES NOT MEET THEIR MINIMUM DEMANDS AND, (B) TO SET IN MOTION EVENTS, PRIMARILY IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHICH COULD LEAD TO GENERAL AREA HOSTILITIES. IT IS OUR VIEW, THEREFORE, THAT INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY ESTIMATES SHOULD VIEW  
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PALESTINIAN ELEMENT WITHIN CONTEXT OF ITS OWN LOGIC AND NOT RPT NOT THROUGH PRISM OF AREA STATES, BE THEY ISRAELI OR ARAB.

5. FUSE IN SOUTH ELBANON: GOL IS NOT RPT NOT PRIME MOVER RE WAR/PEACE DECISIONS IN AREA, BUT IT IS NO LONGER PRUDENT TO ASSUME THAT EVENTS ALONG ITS BORDER WITH ISRAEL FALL OUTSIDE THE MAINSTREAM OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.

SOUTH LEBANON CURRENTLY PROVIDES A STAGE ON WHICH OPENING SCENES OF NEXT ARAB-ISRAELI ROUND, ACCIDENTAL OR PRE-MEDITATED, COULD BE PLAYED OUT. IN FACT, PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE THERE, CASE CAN BE MADE FOR CONSIDERING SOUTH LEBANON ONE OF MOST LIKELY SITES FOR OPENING GAMBITS.

6. DEPT AND ADDRESSESS FULLY CONVERSANT WITH SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON, I.E. SUBSTANTIAL ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE LACKING STRONG INTERNAL COHESION AND DISCIPLINE; LIMITED GOL CAPACITY TO CONTROL EITHER TERRITORY OR FEDAYEEN FORAYS AGAINST ISRAEL; AND TEL AVIV'S UNDERSTANDABLE SENSITIVITY TO FEDAYEEN SHENANIGANS. THESE COMBINE TO PRODUCE CONDITIONS WHICH ARE, PARADOXICALLY, LEAST CONTROLLABLE YET MOST EASILY MANIPULATED OF ANY OF ISRAEL'S FRONTIERS WITH ARAB WORLD. STIR INTO THIS MIXTURE SERIOUS INTRA-PALESTINIAN RIVALRIES AND TEMPTATIONS TO OUTBID ONE ANOTHER IN ANTI-ISRAELI MILITANCY AND ACTUAL AND/OR POTENTIAL MEDDLING BY OTHER ARAB STATES IN GOL/PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP AND LEAVEN WITH FACT OF LEBANESE CONFESSIONAL DIVISION( WHICH WOULD PROBABLY POLARIZE EVEN FURTHER AROUND CRISIS INVOLVING PALESTINIANS), AND WE BELIEVE IT CLEAR WHY SNIE SHOULD TAKE MORE FULLY INTO ACCOUNT SOUTH LEBANON FACTOR IN TOTAL EQUATION.

7. WITHOUT ATTEMPTING COMPLETE CATALOG OF POSSIBLE SCENARIOS AND DEFERRING TO JUDGMENT OF DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, ETC., WE CAN SUGGEST NUMBER OF WAYS IN WHICH MORE GENERAL HOSTILITIES COULD FLOW FROM HAPPENINGS IN AND AROUND SOUTH LEBANON. (A) PLO LEADERSHIP, BELIEVING ITSELF LIKELY TO BE FROZEN OUT OF ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT, AS HAD BEGUN TO OCCUR DURING SECRETARY'S RECENT AREA SHUTTLE, MIGHT DECIDE TO INVITE ISRAELI ACTION IN SOUTH LEBANON WHICH SURROUNDING ARAB STATES MIGHT NOT BE ABLE OR WILLING TO IGNORE. INTERESTINGLY, AT TIME OF  
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SNIE'S PREPARATION, THE SUSPENSION OF SECRETARY'S SHUTTLE, WHICH REMOVED THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF A SEPARATE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT, GREATLY REDUCED THIS PARTICULAR THREAT FOR THE NEAR TERM. (B) PALESTINIAN "REJECTIONISTS, SENSING DETERMINATION OF ARAB STATES AND PLO "MODERATES" TO PROCEED WITH POLITICAL SOLUTION WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF SIMILAR SPOILING TACTICS. (C) ISRAEL, AS RESULT OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOL AND PALESTINIANS WHICH LEFT LATTER MEASURABLY STRONGER AND MORE ACTIVE, COULD CONSIDER OCCUPATION, TEMPORARY OR MORE PERMANENT, OF PORTIONS OF SOUTH LEBANON, THEREBY EXCITING CONCERN OF DAMASCUS REGARDING SYRIA'S WESTERN FLANK. WE THUS CONSIDER SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON TO HAVE MUCH MORE THAN LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE, PROVIDING A TRUMP CARD FOR THE MILITARILY WEAK (I.E., PALESTINIANS) AND MANIFOLD OPPORTUNITIES FOR

BACKING OR SLIDING INTO GENERAL HOSTILITIES, EITHER BY MIS-  
CALCULATION OR DESIGN.  
GODLEY

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